XIO3

GCACE

Garden City Atari Computer Enthusiasts

1003 Amphion St. Victoria, B.C. Canada V8S 4G2

SUMMER 2000

ATARI News and Rumours

by Rowland Grant

I notice that share prices of Hasbro Inc. dropped 24 percent recently, as second quarter earnings dropped 80 percent. While this is not unlike the performance of other high tech companies lately, I wonder if Hasbro got some of the old Atari luck when it bought the assets of Atari Corp.

New games for the Atari Jaguar released last year were the culmination of development that began while the Jaguar was still in production. There are few of these games left in the pipeline. It's now up to the hobbyists to create Jaguar games. And some hobbyists have produced the software and hardware needed to create and run the games. The JUGS (Jaguar Unmodified Game Server) consists of a special cable connecting a Jaguar to a PC, a loading utility program and a firmware chip piggybacked within a BattleSphere Jaguar game cartridge. JUGS uses the BattleSphere cartridge to bypass the Jaguar's internal encryption routines. Also the Jaguar Development Club (somewhere in Germany) has announced the creation and release of the Official Jaguar Development Manual available for download in PDF format.

Uwe Seimet, the creator and publisher of the HDDriver software for hard drives on all TOS computers has stopped supporting the Hades TOS computer. Uwe claims that a cache bug in the Hades BIOS prevents his software from working correctly. There doesn't seem to be much support for the Hades by its creator either, who has known about this bug for some time and hasn't bothered to fix it. Some years ago the Hades computer sported a Motorola 68060 CPU and could match or exceed the performance of most computers on the market such as the early Power PC Macintosh computers and the early Pentiums. Now it is rather out of date, although still a formidable computer. More recently, the Milan computer was released in Germany as a low cost TT clone using the earlier 68040 CPU. This is an improvement on the TT but rather obsolete otherwise. The Milan II with a 68060 chip has been promised "sometime soon", but there is little more. We know that Woller in Germany is working on a TV card for the Milan, but that could be for the existing '040 models as well. So far there is nothing more on all the promised deals between the Milan backers and Motorola. As far as anyone knows, Milan makers have not made any deals to license Magic! or HDDriver or any other important software. Rudolphe Czuba was encouraged by the Milan crew to make a prototype DSP card for the Milan (for Falcon emulation). He did so, and has not heard anything from Milan's developers since. There are suspicions that the Milan II project is being dropped quietly, perhaps because the expected market and financial support is drying up. There are rumours that the Milan crew are working on a Linux based computer.

Work seems to be continuing on enhancements of existing TOS computers. Cortex design is still working on a PowerPC accelerator card for the Falcon and also an interface allowing the use of current PCI cards. Istari software is said to be working on the necessary software drivers. Of course this is being done in someone's spare time. We may never see this hardware on the market.hardware on the market. Mario Becroft is still developing his VME bus graphics card

See *Rumours* on Page 4

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GCACE EXECUTIVE

President: Gordon Hooper	475-0857
Email: ghooper@victoria.tc.ca	
Vice President: John Picken	598-2386
Email: yg473@victoria.tc.ca	
Secretary: Rowland Grant	598-3661
Email: rfgrant@acts.bc.ca	
Treasurer: John Towler	382-5083
Email: towler@islandnet.com	
Editor: Gordon Hooper	475-0857
ST Librarian: Ted Skrecky	598-6173
Email: ud264@victoria.tc.ca	
8-Bit Librarian: Cliff Bouvette	598-3904
Email: yd556@victoria.tc.ca	
Director: Noel Black	388-4527
Email: uy390@victoria.tc.ca	
Director: Bruce Funk	656-1709
Email: grouchie@acts.bc.ca	
Director: George Rose	652-0572
Email: yj271@victoria.tc.ca	

CREDITS

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Garden City Atari Computer Enthusiasts
1003 Amphion Street,
Victoria, B.C. V8S 4G2.

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MEMBERSHIP

Membership dues are $20 per family per year. Membership includes a subscription to this newsletter, access to a few hundred 8-bit public domain disks and 210 ST disks in our library and literally thousands of 8-bit and ST PD files on various CD-ROMS.

MEETINGS

Meetings are held in the Nellie McClung branch of the Greater Victoria Public Library at 3950 Cedar Hill Road (corner of McKenzie) on the fourth Thursday of each month. All meetings are at 7 pm. There is no meeting in the month of December.

EDITORIAL

For Help Call:

Club Information:	Gord Hooper	475-0857
	Rowland Grant	598-3661
8-Bit Applications:		
Bellcom Disks	John Picken	598-2386
Programming	"	"
DOS & Operating System	"	"
Word Processing	"	"
Games	Ted Skrecky	598-6173
16/32 Bit Applications:		
Desktop Publishing	Gord Hooper	475-0857
Word Processing	"	"
Games	Ted Skrecky	598-6173
Telecommunications	"	"
TOS & Operating System	John Towler	382-5083
Hardware:		
Modem & Printer Setup	John Picken	598-2386
Repairs & Sales	Gord Hooper	475-0857
Other Computers:		
Apple Macintosh	John Towler	382-5083
Commodore Amiga	Ted Skrecky	598-6173
IBM's & Clones	Rowland Grant	598-3661
	Ted Skrecky	598-6173
	John Picken	598-2386

PEEKing Around

by Gordon F. Hooper

... Not much to report on the day before Halloween. I guess the most embarassing thing happened to me, so I feel if I'm prepared to make fun of other people, I have to be able to take it myself, even if is self-inflicted. That word is inflicted, not abuse, Picken. I brought my IBM computer to the October meeting to demonstrate how to burn songs taken from an audio CD disk on to a blank CD. When I buy an audio CD, it probably has only one or two songs that I really like, leaving another ten or twelve to take up space. By picking the only the songs I like, I get a custom "Best Of " album with my favourite songs on them. Everything was going well until I tried to demonstrate how there was only one song on the CD ReWritable disk I brought. Only problem was there was no sound. The volume was turned up, the speakers were plugged into the computer and the transformer was plugged into the speakers, so the damn song should have been playing. That was when someone, I think it was NOEL BLACK, picked up one speaker and said it smelled burnt, which caused us to look at the transformer and the speakers. The speakers wanted 6 volts, while the transformer was pumping out twelve. Problem solved, speakers screwed. Some idiot had brought the wrong transformer to the meeting. I did manage to show how to use the software, but I couldn't play the results. JOHN PICKEN did say it was the first time I got a piece of software and hardware to work by myself without his help. That was a very large prevarication that hurt me deeply, almost taking me to the point of tears. Software I can always figure out, at least since my 8-bit days. It's the hardware I have trouble with. If I can't fix the computer with the one-foot or two-foot drop cure, I have to phone John... Be sure and phone GORD at 475-0857 with any of your own lies you'ld like to share with and about other GCACE members... On to the jokes...

GROANERS FROM THE WEB

How do crazy people go through the forest?
They take the psychopath.

How do you get Holy water?
You boil the hell out of it.

What do fish say when they hit a concrete wall?
Dam!

What do Eskimos get from sitting on the ice too long?
Polaroids.

What do you call a boomerang that doesn't work?
A stick.

What do you call Santa's helpers? Subordinate clauses.

What do you call four bullfighters in quicksand?
Quatro sinko.

What do you get from a pampered cow?
Spoiled milk.

What do you get when you cross a snowman with a vampire?
Frostbite.

What lies at the bottom of the ocean and twitches?
A nervous wreck.

What's the difference between roast beef and pea soup?
Anyone can roast beef.

Where do you find a dog with no legs?
Right where you left him.

Why do gorillas have big nostrils?
Because they have big fingers.

Why don't blind people like to sky dive?
Because it scares the shit out of their dogs.

What's the difference between a bad golfer and a bad skydiver?
A bad golfer goes Whack, damn. A bad skydiver goes Damn, whack.

How do you catch a unique rabbit?
Unique up on it.

How do you catch a tame rabbit?
Tame way, unique up on it.

What do you call skydiving lawyers?
Skeet.

What goes clop, clop, bang, bang, clop, clop?
An Amish drive-by shooting.

How are a Texas tornado and a Tennessee divorce the same?
No matter what, somebody's gonna lose a trailer.

for Mega ST's and TT's. So far he has got it working at 800X600 pixels in true colour (16 bit). But Mario has been very busy lately too, and had to take a six month break from his Atari hobby. Rudolphe Czuba cancelled his CT60 accelerator card for Falcon computers due to lack of sufficient interest. He needed one hundred buyers to make it financially worthwhile. Now Rudolphe is trying again with a new somewhat cheaper expansion card. We'll see. There is an audio add-on for the Falcon called FalcAMP. It has been updated so that it can stream mpeg music off the internet and play it in real time. Ethernet connections are possible on all TOS computers using a cartridge port bridge which connects with a standard pocket ethernet adaptor. This is available in Germany, and I assume that a software driver goes with it, unless it uses a third party driver such as MagiCNet.

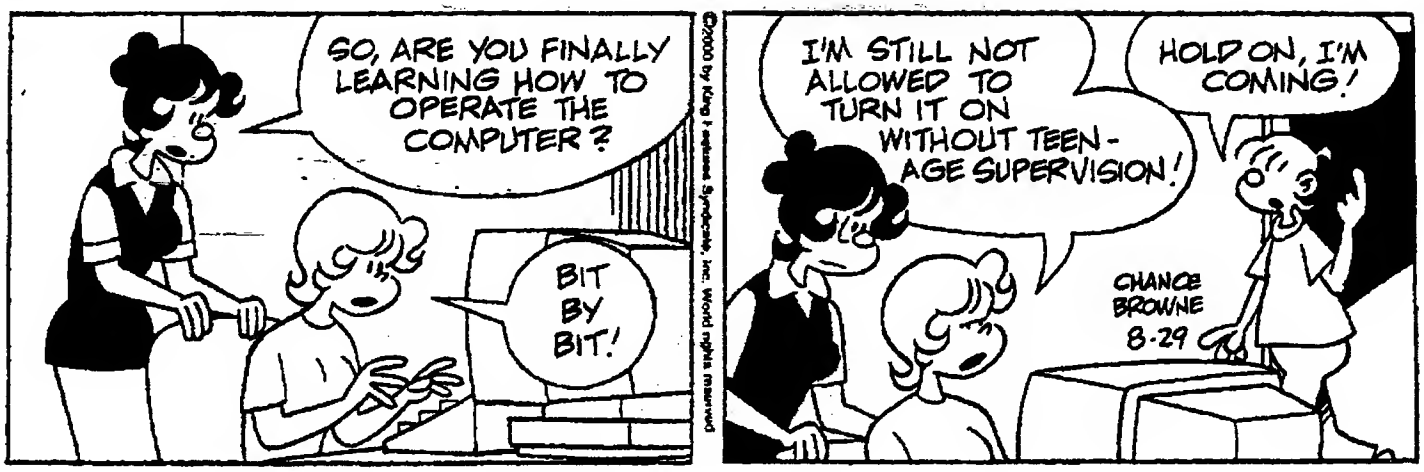
Apparently MagiCNet is almost complete. It is a software package including device drivers, tools, test programs, serial and MIDI drivers, ethernet and the programmers socket library. The ethernet feature was programmed by the developer of the pocket adaptor project. This ethernet driver also runs under MiNTNET. In Canada, Anodyne software has updated its ExtenDOS Gold software. In addition to reading and writing CD's it will support making CD audio tracks into WAV files. It can now be used as a CD driver on emulators such as MagicMac and MagicPC. It will support IDE type CD-ROMs. The CDWriter portion of EXtenDOS can create audio CDs that can be played back on a standard audio player. It can also back up hard drive partitions to CDs, and of course can create standard ISO9660 CDs that can be read on any system including TOS.

Every few months, it seems, Francois Le Coat updates his Eureka 2D and 3D modelling software. He has added two new graphics rendering modes: coloured mesh and Gourand visible mesh. Of course, 3D coloured graphics requires a lot of computer resources, and I suspect that rendering using a TT would take a lot of time. In fact anything very ambitious in 3D on the TT might be out of the question. After all, most of the current Macs and PCs need 3D graphics cards for that purpose. Eric is hoping that a new Milan TOS computer will turn up with such a card. Also Eric Hall (of Sweden) has updated his MyMail e-mail client software using STik and STing software (slip or ppp protocols). The latest version has more mailboxes, more filters and multicheck of mail accounts. A new version of the STARCALL PRO terminal program has been released. It will also handle Fax and has BBS capabilities. The latest version of Wensuite, the internet package from France will not be released in English. This is because of the complaints about it from Anglophone users. Maybe Wensuite works in France, but most users cannot get it to connect elsewhere in the world.

Electric Cow, makers of MIDI software for TOS computers has now released its programs as shareware. Many other publishers have released MIDI software as freeware. FlexTrax, a soundtracker for the Atari Falcon is available for download from Daniel Hedberg in Sweden. It supports the standard MOD file format and also the newer FLX extended version of MOD. Another MIDI controller and composition tool is Mousterpiece, so named because of its extensive use of the mouse. Mousterpiece may be a commercial product, it is not clear. However Harry Koopmans (Holland) MIDI JOY software is freeware.

I mentioned in a previous issue that MacGorilla had an Atari page on the web. MacGorilla has been revised and the Atari page is gone. However Matthew Bacon has announced the creation this fall of a web magazine, http://www.myatari.net. It will include Atari news, product reviews, feature articles, tutorials, software, the works. I hope that this one is real, (I couldn't find it) and lasts for awhile.

Hi & Lois



GCACE MEETINGS

PC's At Meetings (Shudder)

The last few meetings had no particular topic of interest. I did demonstrate PCXformer 8-bit emulator again in July. This time I attached a colour VGA monitor to my Toshiba laptop. It was a big improvement over the monochrome liquid crystal screen. A number of 8-bit demos from the Atari Pool Disk CD were run during the meeting.

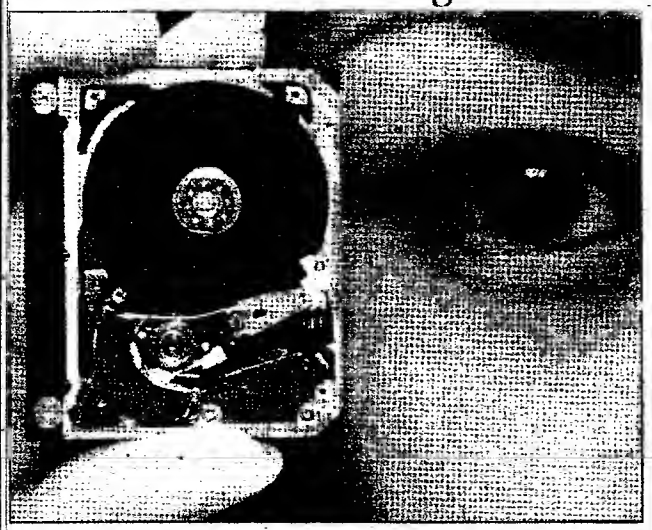
Like other Atari user groups, our numbers have been declining slowly for some years. In September we dropped below 20 members for the first time since 1985. As there are nine members on the Club executive, or about half the membership, it was decided at the executive meeting in August to hold future executive committee meetings as part of the general meeting. In September we held the first joint meeting, which seemed to work out.

For the last ten years we have brought an Atari ST computer to club meetings so that members could access the ST library. The 8-bit library is a bit too bulky to bring to meetings, although 8-bit computers are often present. Now there are requests to bring a Windows machine so that Windows problem solving can be demonstrated. There have been no requests to bring Macintosh computers, as our Mac users are not admitting to any problems.
It was agreed that we would refrain from starting a new PD library for non-Atari computers.

There was talk about our future at the Annual General Meeting in January of this year. Then, the consensus was that we would carry on as long as there was any interest in the Club. Thanks to financial prudence in the past, we are in a position to continue renting a meeting room for several years without any further income. Publishing a printed newsletter for a handful of members might not be economical, although we could continue to issue something in file form and distribute by e-mail.

These are matters that can be discussed at our next Annual General Meeting on January 25th 2001. Since this is the last newsletter before the meeting, I hereby make official announcement that there will be elections for a new executive at the Annual General Meeting as required by our constitution.

The incredible shrinking hard disk



TORU YAMANAKA / AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

An employee of IBM Japan Ltd., shows off a newly developed 1-gigabyte hard disk drive "Microdrive" yesterday at the laboratory in Fujisawa, a suburb of Tokyo. The company will start supplying the world's smallest HDD, which measures 42.8mm long, 36.4mm wide and 5mm high, including a hard disk of 27 milimeters in diameter, in July for portable electronic devices such as digital cameras.

Farewell To Ol' Hackers

by Rowland Grant

In July there was an internet announcement that "due to declining membership, the Ol' Hackers Atari Users Group will close its doors after its final meeting in December 2000". Recently we received the July-September issue of the Ol' Hackers disk based newsletter. The last meeting reported was held in April, and the current newsletter states that the Ol' Hackers no longer have regularly scheduled meetings. They do arrange informal meetings in the Long Island area. John Hardie, guest editor of the July-Sept issue explained the situation in his editorial. I quote the first three paragraphs below.

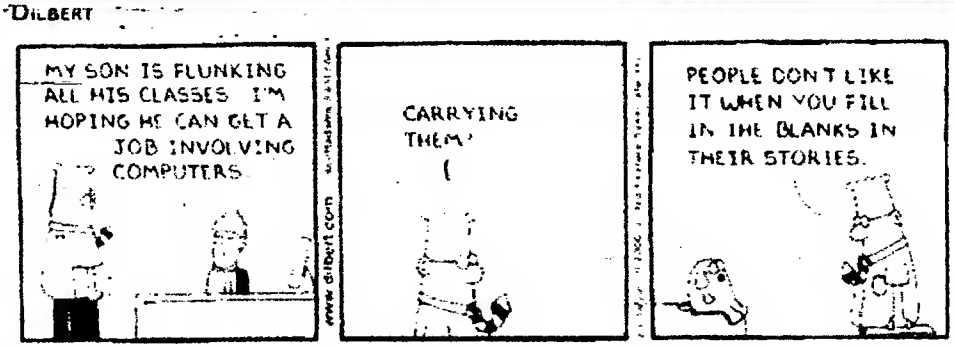
"Alas, it is with a sad heart that we're approaching the end of the Ol' Hackers User Group as we know it. While I am, and have been, vehemently opposed to our once great club becoming a mere social gathering for discussing PC programs, I am helpless to stop it. I am as guilty as the next person in regards to not having time and energy to spend to keep the club going. Our recent loss of several members coupled with a dwindling interest from many local users makes it all but impossible to forge ahead. While I can see the benefits of bowing out with our heads held high, I certainly don't have to like it. ... "

The Ol' Hackers Newsletters were issued on disk. The issues from 1990 to present have been put in ATR, DCM and Zip formats. These are available now from www.atariarchives.org/oldhackers/ . These disks contained articles and Atari software. I'm going to miss them. Ol' Hackers has a PD library of Atari 8-bit software that occupies about 700 floppy disks. It's fate is unknown, but Kevin Savetz has offered to archive the Ol' Hackers library and put it on the web. It's a big job, but not too complicated, so with any luck, it will be available on the Web soon.

Ken Savetz is the right man for the job. He is curator of the Digital Antic Project. Now all 88 issues of Antic magazine, published from April 1982 to July 1990 have been digitized. The project took four years and comprises 1700 articles, 2400 images and 1600 program files. This material uses more than 100 MB of storage on www.atarimagazines.com. It was an immense task completed by Ken and thirty other volunteers. Ken reports that volunteers have already begun digitizing STart and Antic Amiga Plus, two other magazines published by the Antic publisher. When asked about digitizing ANALOG, the other great 8-bit Atari magazine, Ken reported that a different group had already completed several issues of ANALOG. Ken is also the moderator of comp.sys.atari.announce, a newsgroup dedicated to news about all Atari computers.

Ullrich von Bassewitz in Germany has released version 2.5 of his CC65 crosscompiler and crossassembler for 6502 systems. Programming is done in C or 6502 assembly language on a PC running Linux, DOS or Windows. It produces code for Commodore 6502 computers, however other enthusiasts have created code libraries supporting Atari 8-bit computers and Apple II computers. Of course compiling and assembling on a PC is very fast compared to an old Atari 8-bit. Still I prefer using assembly language on the real Atari since it is far more interactive. I notice that Sidney Cadot in Holland has reverse engineered the Atari XL/XE ROM and obtained the source code. He has used the CC65 assembler to create 8-bit ROM and Atari BASIC files. These are for use with the various Atari 8-bit emulators running on PC's. The most common of these seem to be Atari800, XL-It! and PCXformer.

Now I see that Rick Cortese and others have begun a project to build a hand held Atari 8-bit clone. The idea is to port the Atari800 emulator to the Texas Instruments c6211 DSP chip and use a liquid crystal screen. Hah! You can program software for the Atari 8-bit on a PC, and run it under emulation on a PC or some new exotic computer. Perhaps that's why Ol' Hackers is folding. Now interest and support is switching to virtual 8-bit Atari computers.



Atari Arcade Hits Review

by Doug Skrecky

As I write this a plumber has invaded my apartment, and is tearingout a part of a wall for starters. Where it will end is anybody's guess.Time to crank up the old ST, and think of more pleasant things.

One fine day recently I spotted the October 1999 issue of *Computer Games* at a Salvation Army. Price was 25 cents - my kind of price. (1 See below) Inside was a review of Atari Arcade Hits. This included Asteroids, Centipede, Missile Command,Super Breakout, Tempest. and Pong. This was loaded up on a wonderful system. Perhaps it was a 600 Mhz Pentium III, with 256 megs of 7 nanosecond SDRAM, and with a GEFORCE DDR video card. They showed a screen shot of Pong. This consisted of two numbers for the score, a dotted line down the center of the screen, a dot for the gameball, and two short lines for the paddles. Here's a quote from the review.

"This collection ultimately defies a simple review, as each game's brilliance transcends its technical limitations. And when you get those little Windows pauses while running an obviously taxing application like Pong, you'll smile, realizing that no modern machine, including yourPentium III, is really the equal of those classic video games." Pongsupports resolutions up to 1024X768.

The only comment about Asteroids was: "Not the 3D version (obviously)."

Centipede was popular with the women. Quote: "a large penis-likebeast descending from the top of the screen, and the only defense is asmall ovary-shaped craft..".

Missile Command was rated sort-of... boring.

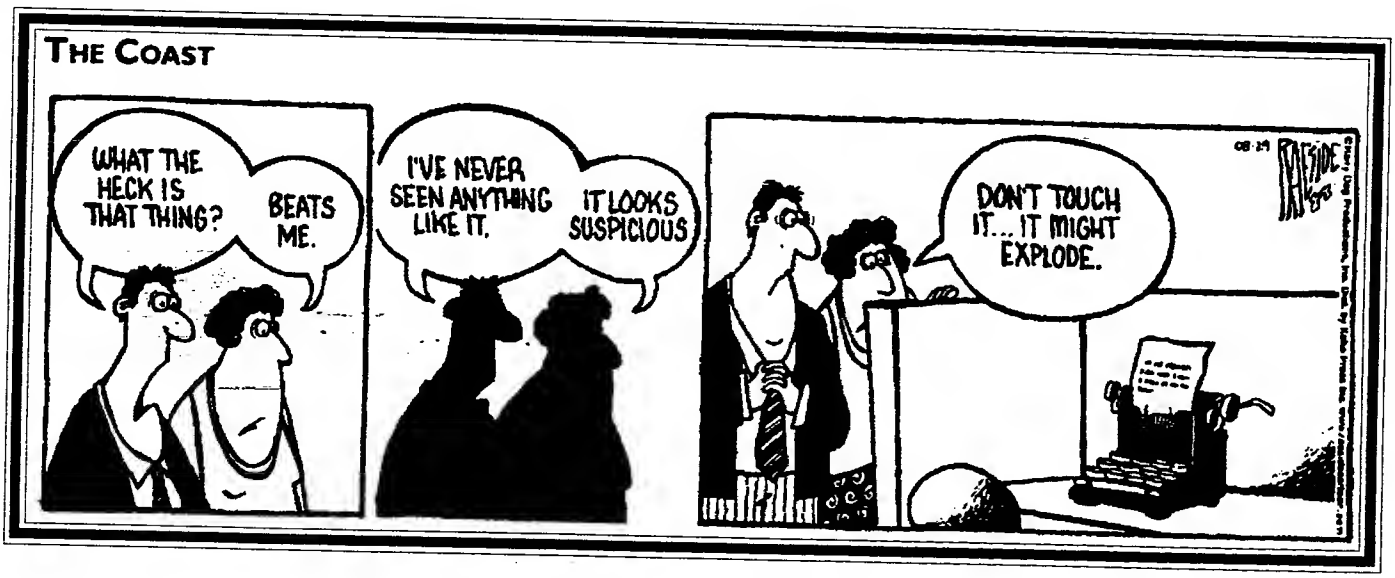
Super Breakout apparently stimulated Pink Floyd to craft an entire album, and tour around the game.

Tempest was rated the best game of the bunch. "Play it with a steering wheel for kind of an uber-Tempest experience."

In my own personal experience many of the games had control problems. A mouse just doesn't cut it, when blasting asteroids. Centipede was interesting only when you'velined up a lot of bugs for a bug massacre, but was otherwise boring. Missile Command for some reason was more interesting when it was available in the arcades. Perhaps my standards were lower eons ago. Super Breakout was for me the best of the bunch. I really sucked at Tempest. Personally I prefered the ST over the PC versions of many of these games.

Ah, the plumber is finished. Says he has placed a TEMPORARY fix. I'LL BE BACK, he says.

(1) The Vancouver Salvation Army is a great place to shop in as long as nobody you know is aware that's where you buy all your cool stuff. Where else can you get 95% off on a London Fog overcoat or Pierre Cardin suit? Wash out the blood stains, and you'll hardly notice a few bullet holes.



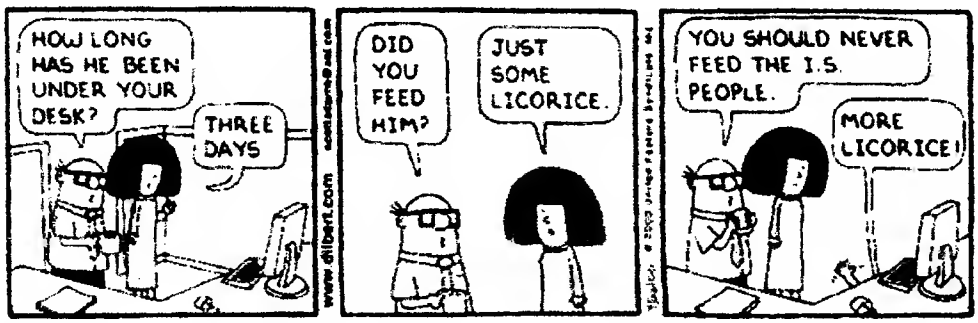
GCACE Financial Report
September, 2000

by John Towler

Income	
Dues	
ST+/PD disk sales	
Coffee	17.00
Donations	
Interest	
Total Income	17.00
Expenses	
Newsletter printing	
Newsletter postage	
Other postage	
Room rental	21.40
Coffee expenses	
Office supplies	
Magazine subscriptions	
ST+ printing	
ST+ royalties	
Service charge	0.32
Total Expenses	21.72
Monthly cash flow	-4.72
Year-to-date cash flow	-130.49
Bank Balance	811.83
Prepaid room rental	42.80
Coffee float	5.00
Net Worth	859.63

DILBERT

DILBERT



DILBERT